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USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · OFFICE OF INFORMATION · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

September 1965

No. 21

IT'S NEW

Dehydrated Celery. First it's frozen, then it's dried. The result: chopped celery that can be kept without refrigeration for use in soups, stews, casseroles, chow mein, and other quick-to-prepare dishes. It's another in a long line of food items made possible by explosion puffing, a processing method developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Although not yet on the market, dehydrated celery will go largely to institutional users and food processors. Consumers will find it in many of the convenience foods they buy.

Chicken Even Cheaper? There's a new mechanical device that makes poultry packing easier and less costly. It's a weigher-sorter -- a joint product of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Georgia Experiment Station. The new machine automatically sorts chicken parts according to weight. To select a piece just the right weight to fill, say, a one-pound package, the worker simply pushes a button. The machine weighs the package and flashes a light over the bin containing the needed piece. The worker then adds that part to the package and seals it. According to the researchers, the device can save as much as 35 percent of the time required in manual selection and weighing.

SMART SHOPPING

Pick the Plentifuls. Grapes, frozen orange juice, turkeys and peanut butter are on the U.S. Department of Agriculture Plentiful Foods List for September. And if you live in the Midwest, South or West, look for lots of purple plums.

Be a Good Shopper. Good buying begins at home when you make up your shopping list. It follows through at the store, where the smart shopper compares quality and price, guarantees and labels. It even extends to such matters as watching weights and measures, checking your sales slip and counting your change. How would you rank as a good shopper? For some hints on how to shop wisely -- send a nickel to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Ask for "Be a Good Shopper," a publication of USDA's Federal Extension Service.



OBSERVANCE

Cooperatives--Partners in American Life. Cooperatives the country over will be in the limelight in October. The month has been designated Cooperative Month. In observance, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will stage a five-day program of activities, October 4 through 8. Special emphasis will be placed on the role of cooperatives in providing high quality consumer goods and services, job opportunities, credit, supply and technical services for farmers, community leadership, electric power and telephone systems in small towns and rural areas. The theme: "Cooperatives--Partners in American Life."

GARDENING -- INDOORS AND OUT

Brighten the Corner Where Your Plants Are. Having trouble growing things in your living room planter? It's probably because there's not enough light. Installation of high intensity fluorescent lights over the plants will stimulate growth--and add to the attractiveness of the display. A new eight-page publication of the U.S. Department of Agriculture tells how to do it. The booklet explains how to build a planter with fluorescent lights. It suggests the plants to use and the care they will need. For a free copy of Indoor Garden for Decorative Plants, send a postcard request to Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250.

Seed Time. Along the northern tier of states, where bluegrass and the fescues grow best, fall is the best time to seed. And if you're one of those people whose lawn has bare spots--or perhaps needs a complete overhaul--you'll soon be shopping for seed. Before you buy, read the label. Any seed that's been shipped across a State line--and most seed is--must carry a truthful label. It's required under the Federal Seed Act administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Look then to this label to tell you what's inside the bag. It will list the percentage of pure seed, crop seed and weed seed as well as the amount of inert matter. It will also give the rate of germination. So be a label reader--and get full value for the seed you buy this fall.

PESTICIDES

Thallium Sulfate Removed from Household Use. Thallium sulfate--a bait for roaches, ants and rodents--may now be applied only by qualified personnel of a Federal, State or local government. In applying this strict interpretation of Federal pesticide regulations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has removed thallium products from use by householders. Previously, elaborate instructions on the use of this highly toxic compound were given on the label. USDA officials, however, found that householders were not using thallium as directed.

When a Brochure Becomes a Label. All the information that comes with a pesticide--its label, its brochure and the advertising material that appears in the store's display--gets the careful scrutiny of the U.S. Department of Agriculture before it's released for use. You can depend on all being reliable. Pesticide advertising in newspapers or on radio and television also is closely checked, although not directly by the Department. Such material comes under the authority of the Federal Trade Commission. Claims made by advertisers must not differ substantially from those in the labeling. FCC cooperates closely with USDA in handling pesticide advertising.

FOOD FACTS

A Half-Century of Eating. A statistical report that tells how per capita food consumption has changed over the past 50 years has been published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Americans, it shows, are now consuming 400 fewer calories each day than they did in 1909. Total annual food consumption is down nearly 200 pounds per person, mostly because of shifts from bulky unprocessed to condensed processed forms. Consumption of meat, poultry and fish is up; unprocessed fruits and vegetables down; dairy products relatively unchanged. For the full report, send a postcard to the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250. Ask for Statistical Bulletin No. 364, "U.S. Food Consumption." This technical publication will be of greatest interest and use to the food industry and food management firms.

Food and Finances. These two subjects dominate the list of ten most popular publications of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. As usual, this year's list is headed by USDA's recipe book, "Family Fare." Nearly 600,000 copies of this publication were distributed in fiscal 1965. Others on the top ten, in the order of their popularity, were: Consumer's Quick Credit Guide, Family Food Stockpile for Survival, Defense Against Radioactive Fallout on the Farm, Removing Stains from Fabrics--Home Methods, Food for Fitness--A Daily Food Guide, A Guide to Budgeting for the Young Couple, Selecting and Growing House Plants, A Consumer's Guide to USDA Services and Money-Saving Main Dishes.

PROGRAM AIDS

Exhibits for Consumers. Need an exhibit to dress up your next convention or conference? The U.S. Department of Agriculture has two new portable exhibits of special interest to consumers. They are available on loan free; you pay only shipping costs. One--Sharing America's Abundance (C&MS-55)--explains the School Lunch Program, USDA's food donation program to needy people and institutions, and the new Food Stamp Program. The other (C&MS-65) deals with the various food grading and inspection services of the Department. To borrow either of these--or for more information--write to Exhibits Service, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250.

Improving Teen-Age Nutrition. It's not new, but it's timely--and important. A slide set and filmstrip on Improving Teen-Age Nutrition, developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The film shows the need--6 out of every 10 teen-age girls have poor diets and 4 out of every 10 boys. The reason is they skip breakfast, eat poor snacks, don't drink enough milk, and fear they'll get fat. The film also suggests what might be done about it--community interest in teen-age nutrition programs through group planning, sound nutrition information, and the direct involvement of the teen-agers. The story is told in 27 color cartoons. It's especially good for P.T.A. showings, to youth groups, clubs and service organizations. For a copy of the script and a look at the cartoons in this series, write: Photography Division, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250.

FOOD HINT

If Your Freezer Stops. Should your home freezer stop running -- and you know it will be off for some time -- there are several things you can do to keep the food from spoiling. Add dry ice. Keep freezer closed. Move the food to a locker plant. Or -- if you have no other choice -- can the food.

RESEARCH UNDERWAY

It's a Truck; It's a Deep Freeze; It's Under Research. A multipurpose van container that can go anywhere and transport anything is being investigated under a U.S. Department of Agriculture research grant to the General American Transportation Corporation of Chicago. In concept, the van could become a truck by adding wheels, a freezer unit by installing a cooling system. It could move by rail (piggyback), highway, sea or air. Because the van itself would be lightweight and require no repacking at any stage of the way, its development could offer a more efficient, lower-cost means of transporting agricultural products. It's something for consumers to look forward to--a promise of even fresher foods, faster and for less money.

Research on Smoking and Health. The problem of tobacco and smoking is being tackled at the University of Kentucky, Lexington. Through a million-dollar U.S. Department of Agriculture grant, the University is seeking to identify and find out how to prevent--and/or remove--any substances in tobacco and tobacco smoke that may be injurious. Congress appropriated the funds last year following release of an advisory committee report to the Surgeon General on smoking and health. The researchers will experiment with the use of chemical modifiers for cigarettes to alter the composition of the smoke. They'll seek to develop tobacco varieties free of possible harmful substances and to find ways of curing, handling and marketing tobacco to prevent metabolic changes that adversely alter its composition.

A HELPING HAND

Build-Your-Own-Home Project. They didn't have money to rent a decent home much less build one. And they couldn't get credit. Yet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farmers Home Administration took a chance. They loaned six low-income families in rural New Jersey \$6,500 each to build their own homes, and offered the help of an experienced building contractor. The money paid for the materials and the cost of excavation, electricity and plumbing. The families did the rest. Together, they laid foundations, erected frames, nailed on siding, did the roofing, and finished the interiors. Now finished, the three- and four-bedroom homes are valued between \$10,000 and \$11,500. The loans will be repaid to FHA at the rate of \$39 a month. USDA is currently making plans to expand this type of self-help aid to other rural areas where it's needed.

SOME STATISTICS

Fat Figures. Last year most adults in the United States ate from one-fourth to one-half their weight in food fats and oils--more than 47 pounds per person. Biggest increase, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports, was in the consumption of cooking and salad oils.

More Milk for More Children. Nineteen out of every 20 U.S. school children can get milk at school--either with lunch, at a special milk break or at a vending machine. The less they have to pay, the more milk they drink, USDA finds.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.